

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested.

New Claims 17-19 have been introduced. Claims 1-15 and 17-19 are active in the application.

Claims 1, 2 and 15 have been amended to further recite that the transfer station comprises two independently vertically movable portions for simultaneously raising and lowering two tire mold assemblies, and means for transferring a tire mold assembly between the transfer stations. New Claims 17-19 correspond to Claims 1, 2 and 15, respectively, except that they do not recite that the transfer stations transfer the tire mold assembly by a rotating action of the transfer stations.

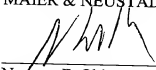
Claims 1-15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious over JP '231 in view of the U.S. Patent to Irie. In response to the arguments presented in the amendment of July 15, 2003, the Examiner alleged that those skilled in the art would have found it obvious to combine JP '231 with Irie because rotation is distinct from vertical movement. Applicant has now further amended the claims to recite two transfer stations comprising two independently vertically movable portions for simultaneously raising and lowering two tire mold assemblies, together with means for transferring a tire mold assembly between the transfer stations. Basis for the two transfer stations may be found, e.g., in the separate transfer stations D' in Figures 3 and 5. Basis for the means for transferring the tire mold assembly between the transfer stations may be found, e.g., in the double headed arrows in Figures 3 and 5, as well as in the description of the transfer of a tire mold assembly between the transfer stations D' (page 28, middle paragraph). By virtue of the plural transfer stations and transfer means, one can rapidly transfer tire molds amongst the plural stages of placing parts, with a compact structure.

If one accepts the Examiner's allegation that Lrie discloses transfer stations 13 for transferring a tire mold assembly by a rising and falling action of the transfer station along a housing shelf of a vulcanizing station, e.g., the carriages 13a and 13b shown in Figure 12, there is nonetheless no teaching in this reference of means for transferring a tire mold between the "transfer stations" 13a and 13b. Since JP '231 also lacks means for transferring a tire mold between two transfer stations provided for transferring a tire mold with a rising and falling action of the transfer station, no combination of the above references would anticipate or render obvious the subject matter of any of the claims.

Applicant therefore believed that the present application is in a condition for allowance and respectfully solicits an early Notice of Allowability.

Respectfully submitted,

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